

Thoughts on the Gita  
(PROFESSOR SATYA VRAT SHASTRI)

Amidst a mass of seemingly disparate matter and the apparent multiplicity of views a discerning critic would naturally ask: what is, if at all, the central teaching of the Bhagavadgita. Before an answer to this is attempted it would be in the fitness of things if notice is taken of the circumstances in which it came into being. In the vast dreary lands of Kurukshetra the two mighty armies of the Kauravas and the Pandavas stood facing each other. The conches had been blown, the drums beaten and the bugles sounded. The strike order was imminent. Exactly at the crucial moment Arjuna, the bravest of the Pāṇḍavas, asked Kṛṣṇa, his charioteer, to take the chariot to the vacant space between the two armies so that he could have a full view of those to whom he <sup>was</sup> going to give the ~~fight~~ fight. The charioteer did as asked and Arjuna cast a glance at his adversaries. He found among them, his brothers, his brothers-in-law, his uncles and other relations. Remorse overstruck him. He became indiffident for fight. He could not summon up courage to strike at his kith and kin, the grand father like Bhīṣma and the teacher like Droṇa among them. He decided not to fight. Occupying now the back seat in the chariot he told Kṛṣṇa that he was experiencing a strange kind of sensation in him, his limbs were aching, his mouth drying up and his body trembling. He would not







like, said he, to enjoy the worldly pleasures soaked in the blood of his near and dear ones. Noticing him in this state Kṛṣṇa decided to shake him out of his melancholy. He disapproved of his decision of not offering fight and told him to get ready for it.

He was sorry that impurity should have crept into Arjuna's mind at the oddest of the hours:

hutas tvā kaśmālam idaṁ viśame samasthitam .

He asked him not to be unmanly, to give up the weakness of the heart and get up:

klāibyaṁ mā sma gamah pārtha, naitat tvayy upapadyate  
ksudraṁ hrdayadaurbalyaṁ tyaktvōt<sup>t</sup>istha parantapa

and further

tāsmād uttistha kauntaya yuddhāya kṛtanideśajah

Get up O Arjuna! resolved to fight.

This is the beginning of the Gītā. After listening to the Lord Arjuna said:

nasto mohah smṛtir labdhā tvatprasādān mayācyuta  
sthito'smi gataśandāhah kariṣye vacanaṁ tava

O Kṛṣṇa, my delusion is over. Through your grace I have got knowledge. My doubts are cleared. I (now) stand up. I will obey your word.







And that is the end of the Gītā.

Its beginning is Uttistha, get up. Its end is Asthito<sup>ā</sup>śmi her<sup>e</sup> I stand. Between these two lies the Gītā.

Its ~~beginning~~ motive, its objective should be all too clear with it. What was it that the Lord gave to Arjuna that made him stand up Asthito<sup>ā</sup>śmi.

It was a kind of philosophy that imparted him clear perspective, infused him with new vigour to take up arms once again, the philosophy of action, with no desire for its fruit, an action with detachment, the philosophy of Karmayoga, for which the Gītā is well known the world over. It is this philosophy which forms the core of the teaching of the great work. Here a side question may well arise: Why should the Lord have waited upto the particular moment of the two armies facing each other and Arjuna's indifference to fight at the sight of his friends, relatives and elders to impart this knowledge. By imparting it ~~earlier~~ he could well have avoided this situation to arise. Why, why that particular moment? After all Kṛṣṇa had been very intimate with Arjuna all along, who could well take the liberty of addressing him as Kṛṣṇa, Yādava and Sakhā, friend, he kṛṣṇa, he yādava, he sakhā<sup>ti</sup>. <sup>s</sup>So intimate was he with the Lord that he could well instruct him in superior knowledge and not keep it back from him. He was also related to him. Why did he not then impart



and then in the end of the day.

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been mentioned in the text.

1. The first name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

2. The second name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

3. The third name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

4. The fourth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

5. The fifth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

6. The sixth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

7. The seventh name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

8. The eighth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

9. The ninth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

10. The tenth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

11. The eleventh name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

12. The twelfth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

13. The thirteenth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

14. The fourteenth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

15. The fifteenth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

16. The sixteenth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

17. The seventeenth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

18. The eighteenth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

19. The nineteenth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.

20. The twentieth name mentioned is that of the person who has been mentioned in the text.



the knowledge to him earlier? The answer to this could be that the superior knowledge has to be imparted judiciously and at the right moment. It is not to be given away to any and everyone but only to those who have developed the spirit of a disciple, śisyabhāva. In that spirit they would be ripe to receive it and can conserve it. Though intimate Arjuna had not upto the particular moment of the sermon assumed the śisyabhāva. He had been a friend, a companion and a relative but not śisya. It is when sorrow overtook him and confusion stalled him that he acquired the spirit of a śisya.

Yachreyah syān niśītam brūhi tan me śisyaś te.  
 'hamsādhi māṁ tvāṁ prapannam.'

Please tell me whatever is best in your judgement. I surrender unto you. I am your disciple.

When the friend in Arjuna had turned a disciple with the feeling of total prapatti, śaranāgati only then was he considered fit enough to receive the superiormost knowledge, the most secret one, guhyād guhyataram jñānam, which in the words of the Gītā itself could not be imparted to any one who has not the proper religious austerity, renunciation and devotion to God nor to the one who does not want to listen or who finds fault with God:







idam te nātāpaskāya nābhaktāya kadācana  
na caśuśrūṣava vācyaṁ na ca mām yo, 'bhyasūyati

In his marathon address to Arjuna the Lord has given this highest knowledge. He has instructed him in Sāṁkhya Yoga, Jñāna Yoga, Rāja Yoga, Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. The knowledge of all the Vedas and the systems of philosophy is contained in his words. Arjuna is afforded the cosmic vision by Him. In answer to a specific question of Arjuna the Lord said that Karma Yoga, in complete surrender to Him, was best suited for him. He cleared all the doubts in Arjuna's mind with reasons and examples till he was fully satisfied. The Lord would, however, not ask Arjuna to follow His instruction blindly. Even the Lord of the Universe, he has a liberal attitude. He has no idea to impose his will on his disciple. He asks him to think over what he has said and then do whatever would please him:

Yimrśyaitad aśesena yathecchasitathā kuru

No dogmatic or doctrinaire approach in the Gita. If instruction is well received it would cause reaction from within. If it fails to do so, well, it is the recipient's lot. If, however, the recipient is ripe for it as the parched earth is for rain water, it may not fail to produce reaction as in the case of Arjuna, who







received it with equanimity after initial dithering even in the thick of the battlefield. Arjuna was the prapanna śisya : sādhi mām tvāṃprapannam, who begged for instruction śādhī. It was therefore not unexpected that the wealth of knowledge emanating from the lord would not fail to produce enlightenment in him.

As has been said earlier the core of the Gītā's teaching is action. The Gītā declares in the most solemn words: karma jyāyo hy akarmanah, action is superior to inaction. ~~The Gītā declares in the most solemn words: karma jyāyo hy akarmanah, action is superior to inaction.~~ The Gītā preaches active life. It does not need one to take to the life of a recluse to gain true knowledge. One can gain that even in the thick of life's activities just as did the Rajarṣis like Janaka, karmanaiva hi saṃsiddhim āsthitā janakādayah, who while fully preoccupied with the royal duties remained completely untouched by them. The ego was just missing in them. That is why they could say:

Mithilāyām pradīptāyām na me dahyati kiñcana

Even while Mithilā is on fire there is nothing mine in it which is being burnt.







Since they were one with the supreme Reality, Brahman, they, even though possessed of body, were bereft of its consciousness. That is why they could come out with the words:

kaścin me dakṣiṇāṁ bāhuṁ candanena samuksayet  
śavyāṁ chindyāt kuthāreṇa samāv etau matau mama

One anointing my right arm with sandal paste and the other chopping off my left one with a spade, both are the same for me.

The philosophy of action of the Gītā is qualified with the inalienable consideration of no desire for the fruit. The key verse enunciating it says:

karmany evādhikāras te mā phaleṣu kadācana  
mā karmaphala-hetur bhūh

Your duty is limited upto the performance of the action only and not its fruit. Do not be the cause of the fruit of the action.

The Lord is only too conscious of the pitfall in this. There is a well known saying in Sanskrit: Prayojanam anuddiśya na mandōpi pravartate, Even a fool would not take to something without a motive. The result of the action is the motive. If the motive is taken away the natural tendency in a man would be not to perform any action.







Why should he perform it at all if he is not to get anything out of it. Realizing this tendency in man the Lord is quick to utter the solemn warning immediately after instructing him not to care for the result of action not to give himself over to inaction: mā tē saṅgōṣṭv akarmaṇi. The Lord knows that inaction by its very nature would not be foreign to man. To keep his body and soul together he will have to perform some action or the other all through:

śarīrayātrāpi ca te na prasidhyed akarmaṇah

Engage one has to oneself in some action or the other, not even for a moment can one be without an action:

nahi kaścit kṣaṇam api jātu tiṣṭhaty akarmakṛt

It is the deliberate inaction that the Lord is asking to avoid. The stillness of the body is not inaction. With the bodily movements controlled, the mind may be free to wander about. To all appearances a man may give the impression of not engaged in action, yet he would be as given to performing action as anybody else. In this he will be deceiving nobody but himself. The Lord in the most forthright words proclaims him a hypocrite: mithyācārah :

ḥarmendriyāni saṁyanya ya āste manasā smaran  
indriyārthān vimūdhātma mithyācārah sa ucyate







So action one has to perform but the Lord advises one to perform it in such a way that one may not have any consideration of its fruit. The Lord illustrates this by his own example, may be it can go home: There is nothing to be gained or achieved by him that He does not have already, as far as He is concerned, still says He, He continues to work:

na me pārthāsti kartavyam trisu lokesu kiñcana  
nānavāptam avāptavyam varta eva ca karmani

The Lord says that a being should keep His example before him. He should continue doing things without caring for their fruit. But a being may here well say: Well the Lord can do it. He is Lord after all. But how can he, a poor being, do it. The Lord is asking him to do something impossible. The Lord realizes this predicament of his and says that in case it is not possible for him to do so in absolute terms, let him be the medium and it is here that the philosophy of action of the Gita, the Karmayoga, imperceptibly glides into the philosophy of Devotion, the Bhaktiyoga. The Lord asks man to offer everything to him, whatever he is doing, whatever he is eating, whatever he is offering in sacrifice, whatever he is giving away (in charity) whatever penance he is practising:

yat kerosi yad asnāsi yaj juṣosi dadāsi yat  
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kuruṣva madarpanam







Even if the consideration of motive cannot be set aside by an ordinary mortal, let him offer all his actions to the Lord. Then the actions will cease suo moto to be those of his and the fruit, if any, emanating from them will also cease to be that of his. The Lord unequivocally declares:

ye tu sarvāṇi karmāṇi mayi samnyasya nat parāṇ  
ananyenaiva yogena mām dhyāyanta upāsate  
tesām ahaṁ samuddhartā mṛtyusaṁsārasāgarāt  
bhavāmi na cirāt pārtha mayy āveśitaś cetasām

These who surrender unto me, who offer me all actions and who meditate on me, who concentrate on me in their minds, I pull them out before long from the ocean of life and death.

Whether actions are performed without desire for their fruit in absolute terms or whether they are performed in the name of the Lord being offered to him together with their fruit, they are to be performed with full understanding. He asks Arjuna to take refuge in knowledge: buddheḥ śaraṇam anviccha. An action done without understanding, according to him, is inferior to that done with it: dūreṇa hy avaram karma buddhiyogāt. An understanding person casts off good and evil in this very life: buddhiyukto jahātīha ubhe sukṛtaduṣkṛte. The Karmayoḥ here imperceptibly glides into the Jñānayoga.



from it the consideration of which must be left  
to the discretion of the court. It is not the  
business of the court to inquire into the  
merits of the case, but to see that the  
law is properly applied. It is not the  
business of the court to decide the facts  
of the case, but to see that the law is  
properly applied to the facts.

THE COURT

It is the duty of the court to see that  
the law is properly applied to the facts  
of the case. It is not the business of  
the court to inquire into the merits of  
the case, but to see that the law is  
properly applied. It is not the business  
of the court to decide the facts of the  
case, but to see that the law is properly  
applied to the facts.

THE COURT  
It is the duty of the court to see that  
the law is properly applied to the facts  
of the case. It is not the business of  
the court to inquire into the merits of  
the case, but to see that the law is  
properly applied. It is not the business  
of the court to decide the facts of the  
case, but to see that the law is properly  
applied to the facts.



The term yoga has been defined by the Lord in two ways. Samatvaṁ yoga ucyate, equanimity is yoga and yogah karmasu kauśalam, Yoga is proficiency in actions. The two definitions give the feeling that two different, unrelated things are being said here. That actually is not so. An intelligent person, buddhiyuktah, has the wisdom to analyse the world. He sees it full of miseries, even the pleasures which appear agreeable in the beginning turn out to be unpleasant in the end. There is nothing permanent in the world, everything is temporary and fleeting. The good and pleasant must be followed, as a rule, by the bad and the unpleasant, as much as a day is followed by night. The inevitable pairs of opposites, the Dvandvas, are the root cause of suffering. The best way to overcome it is to develop equanimity of mind, Samatva. The mind then will not be influenced by them. But this is not hardening the heart or developing callousness which are individualized self defences and lack of understanding of the reality. In the Yoga of action there is complete and total dedication to work, there is no shunning the work and its results, pleasant and unpleasant. One takes to the Yoga of action of purity of the senses and the mind with the firm understanding,



CC-O. Prof. Satya Vrat Shastri Collection. Digitized By Siddhanta eGangotri Gyaan Kosha



Jñāna, that the Ātman is free and unaffected by the external world and that the confusing factors are the sense organs and their objects. The purification of the mind cannot be brought about by only sitting aloof. It can be done by skilful performance of one's duty forsaking the ego, doership and enjoyment of fruits of action. ~~is~~. This is yoga of action, Karmayoga, in its conjunction with Jñānayoga.

While referring to the Jñāna above it has been said that it means the understanding that the Ātman is completely unaffected by what goes around. It is here that the Jñānayoga imperceptibly glides into the Sāṅkhya Yoga. The Ātman is eternal, omnipresent, permanent, immovable and everlasting:

nityah sarvagatah sthānur acalo'yaṁ sanātanaḥ

It is the body which perishes and not the soul which is unmanifest, unimaginable and immutable. What really it is difficult to say. There is nothing tangible with which it can be compared. The Upaniṣads rightly, therefore, describe it, neti, neti, not this, not this, people look at it as wonder so they speak and hear of it as wonder. They know not what it is. While performing an action one should have the understanding that it is his body and the senses that would be engaged in it and not the soul whose effulgent light is discerned after piercing through the hard shell of ego that envelopes wisdom by dispassion, asaṅga, karma-







dhāra-tyāga, buddhi and manas. But before this can be attempted a strict control over the mind and the senses is an absolute necessity and here comes the Aṣṭāṅga Yoga that helps one to attain self control. The Lord knows that the mind is fickle, manas, impetuous and wayward:

cañcalaṁ hi manah kṛṣṇa pramāthi balavad-drdham

If that is the state of mind, the state of the senses can well be imagined. The mind is compared to a charioteer and the senses to the horses. If the charioteer is out of control the horses are bound to go astray, particularly when the horses are wayward, indriyāṇi pramāthīni. The mind has first to be put under control which can be done by means of practice and nonattachment:

abhyāseṇa tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate

The senses then are to be put under restraint, tani sarvāṇi samyamya. One has to elevate oneself to the state of sthita-prajñā, unperturbed in sorrow with no craving for pleasures, with all attachment, fear and anger gone, remaining blissful in Ātman: ātmany evātmanā tuṣṭaḥ, and still doing his duties skilfully, the skill being in doing them without any desire for their fruit and with the full understanding that the soul will remain unaffected by them.







Freedom from attachment and absence of egotism is the hallmark of realized souls. It is not the freedom obtained by shunning the world and remaining in seclusion or the freedom to do things at will in which one is bound to feel the individuality and build the ego. It is living in the world, unaffected by it and destroying the ego. When the ego is completely erased the individual merges with the universal. There remains no distinction between the self and the non-self, myriads of names and forms merge into the non dual Brahman. This is the supreme state, free from duality and the delusion born of it. Fixed in that state even at the end, the time of death, one attains the bliss of Brahman:

esā brāhmī sthitiḥ pārtha naināṁ prāpya  
vimuhyati  
sthitvāsyām antakāle'pi brahmanirvāṇam  
rechatī.

---



Freedom from attachment and absence of craving is  
the nature of released soul. It is the freedom  
obtained by entering the world and realizing it as  
of the nature to be known it will be known and it will  
to feel the individuality and still the soul is free  
in the world, well-located by it and it is not lost  
the ego is completely merged in the universal. There remains no individuality  
the universal. There remains no individuality  
self and the soul itself, united in one and the same  
into the soul itself. This is the nature of  
free from duality and the highest state of soul is  
the state even in the world, the state of soul, the state  
the state of freedom.

THE NATURE OF THE SOUL  
THE NATURE OF THE SOUL  
THE NATURE OF THE SOUL